THE STORY OF AN AMERICAN VEGAN

(Extracted from the "American Vegetarian," June, 1946)

Rubin Abramowitz is an astonishing young man past 32 years of age. Five years ago a great change came into his life. A friend invited him to various Vegetarian repasts that he found very enjoyable. Then he decided to spend his vacation at Camp Hygiology and learn all that Dr. Robert Anderson could teach him. There he entered upon a new way of life.

To quote Rubin, "I seeped up bucketsful of information on the Vegetarian way of living. I learned it was the idealistic, spiritual, stepping stone to undreamed of heights; why it was the ideal way to eat for health's sake; why it was hygienically, morally, and aesthetically, the finest pattern for existence.

"I came home an unshakable, convinced Vegetarian and diet reformer beginning by renouncing meat, fish, coffee, tea, cocoa, salt, pepper, white flour and white sugar. Later I gave up the use of all dairy products, then the use of cooked vegetables; and for a period of eight months I even became a Fruitarian, living on raw fruits, nuts and fruit juices."

When War came, since he was a pacifist and conscientious objector, he was sentenced to the Federal Penitentiary, Ashland, Kentucky, for two and a half years. We shall let Rubin continue his own tale of resistance. "Upon arrival, I informed the examining medical officer, Dr. Janney, that I was a Vegetarian, that I was opposed to injections and the wearing of leather. He advised me to adjust myself to prison life, but I refused. I practically starved for five days because all the foods were cooked with lard or meat extracts. Then special provisions were made for me to receive a Vegetarian diet which was made available to another Vegetarian, too.

"The day for blood-tests, vaccinations and typhoid shots came. I went with the other men in quarantine down to the prison clinic. When it came to my turn for the blood test, I refused to allow it, whereupon I was brought to see Dr. Janney, the Chief Medical Officer. He argued and pleaded with me to change my mind; I refused. Guards and the associate Warden were called and force was threatened. The doctor said that he was inclined to give in on the vaccination and typhoid shots, but that I must allow the blood test. I refused. He asked whether I would resist, I replied that I would try to stop them from puncturing me. Thereupon the doctor, who was more ethical than any other prison doctor in the United States, had me confined to a room in the Hospital for two weeks. Each day he came round endeavouring to make me change, but I remained adamant. Finally I was released because there was

no evidence of disease. I joined the rest of the prison population of 450.

"I kept after the authorities to let me wear non-leather shoes. After a month and a half of persistent effort, I was permitted to have my canvas shoes forwarded from home. Meanwhile, I was agitating among the 'near-Vegetarians' to join us at the Vegetarian table. Before long 11 men were eating there. I then applied for a transfer from the laundry to the job of preparing Vegetarian foods for the V-table. This was allowed although it was the first time such a table had ever been set up in the Bureau of Prisons. I baked bread with soyabean oil or oleo, prepared cooked vegetables without salt and made up raw salads whenever they could be obtained.
privilege was granted, and it grew to 24 satisfied customers. I

"Before long other men applied to join the V-table. This will never forget the wonderful experience of preparing nutritious foods for men who really appreciated my efforts. Even the Chief Medical Officer began sending men with stomach disorders to the Vegetarian table. I converted the strongest man in the prison, a champion weight-lifter, to the Vegetarian diet, and today he writes that he has given up even dairy foods. Others told me that my cooking and baking convinced them of the benefits of a Vegetarian diet and that they intended to continue it even after leaving the prison. They were a mixed group at the V-table; pacifists, Jehovah's Witnesses, thieves, and even illegal whiskey makers.

"The doctor informed me that he was writing a book on prison life and was devoting a whole chapter to Vegetarianism, with myself as the chief subject. I gave him a copy of the 'Vegetarian Anthem' and the 'Call of Peace' that I had written. He told me that he would never forget me. Even the director of the Bureau of Prisons came on a visit and inspected the V-table. Vegetarians in other prisons learned about the V-table, but unfortunately they were not allowed any of our privileges.

"I was released after seven months of my prison term with a 4-F rating. I was sent home a free man although deprived of certain rights as a citizen. I was proud that I had withstood the twin forces of the Bureau of Prisons and the medical hierarchy. I had won out on every point. Today I have learned that the Vegetarian table is still going strong at that prison and may become a permanent set up. Thus it can be seen how even one obscure person can become a vital force in the lives of people, provided he is firm no matter what the cost.

"At present I am in Tujunga, California, where I have begun the Ahimsa Co-operative Community, based upon Co-operative action, Vegetarianism and Pacifism. There are only four in our group; but who knows how big a tree will grow from a tiny seed? If I am faithful to my plan I am sure that

I will achieve what I envision ; a Vegetarian Pacifist community, self-sufficient, using only clean culture foods, no animal products in food or clothing, a progressive school with humane teaching and projects. Some day the whole world will learn that ours is the only way to Peace on Earth, Good-will to all men."